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The housing, work, health, and schooling conditions of Colorado migrant workers and their children were presented. Housing conditions for domestic laborers were very poor. There were no wells, no refrigeration, no running water, no stoves other than woodburning or coal ones, and no screens on doors and windows. It was suggested that migrant workers receive guaranteed wages and part pay when unable to work because of weather conditions. Improvement was needed in terms of cleanliness, lice prevention, and eye and ear care; nevertheless, the health of Colorado migrant children was generally good. School personnel went to the homes of migrants and tried to persuade parents to send their children to school. Of the families contacted, 37 families entered a total of 100 children. The other families would not allow their children to enroll, because the youngsters had to work in the fields. The school session was six weeks long. Every minute of the day was a learning session.

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DEAR FELLOW AMERICANS:

Rocky Ford 1961 Special Term

U. S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH, EDUCATION AND WELFARE
Office of Education

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1961

Dear Fellow Americans:

So often when we are complacent about life as it affects us personally, we tend to forget there are those who are less fortunate. We are associated with these less fortunate children everyday--if they seem to us to be not completely thankful for the necessities, as we call them, let us not forget, perhaps they have never been taught as we have been. Nor have they been afforded the opportunities which we have taken for granted.

As one of our early American forebears said, quote, "These are the Times That Try Men's Souls". So be it in 1961.

It becomes increasingly apparent as each summer term passes that we are closing our eyes to this small segment of Americans. There are so many things left undone which would make life so much easier and more livable for these much needed peoples. The remarks within this paper are opinions of the writer and observations the writer has made for the past five years.

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HOUSING

Deplorable - certainly the only thing that could be said about the housing conditions. No running water, no wells, just cisterns that cannot possibly pass any health standards. No refrigeration for foods. Few, if any, stoves other than coal or woodburning stoves. Few, if any, screens on doors and windows. Outdoor privies and the crudest type possible. Some not even having that type of toilet. Overcrowded conditions within houses where many children and adults live under unbearable circumstances. For example, a 5-room house occupied by 45 children and adults.

These homes are usually unoccupied during the year except when the migrants arrive for work.

There are definite standards to be met for Braceros as far as housing is concerned, but none for domestic labor.

Typical Housing

WORK

The unusually cold and wet weather this spring in the Arkansas Valley caused crops to be late in starting. The workers who were here early did not get much work, and were going in the hole as far as finances were concerned. The groceries were on credit, and they were not making enough to pay for them. Several families stated they had only two to three hours work per day for three days each week. Later on, there were not enough workers to clean the fields of weeds. The warm weather caused the weeds to grow at an alarming rate.

Some farmers claim the domestics are not good workers and not dependable. Have they tried giving these people a guaranteed wage and part pay if they are unable to work due to weather conditions? The Braceros are treated in this manner, why not domestics?

A shot of the fertile Arkansas Valley.

HEALTH

Each successive year we find the children to be cleaner and to have better clothing to wear to school.

They love the showers given three times weekly at school. The majority even stay in for the cold shower. This once was a means of getting them out, but it no longer serves that purpose.

There was the same family back with their usual quota of lice. They were aware of them and ashamed of them. This is a definite improvement because before it seemed they thought lice were something everyone had and must contend with.

All families had started or completed D.P.T. and Polio shots with one exception. This family has started and will get several of the series before leaving Rocky Ford. The

migrant nurse this year is Miss Nelda Rhoades, and she is a hustler. The health problems as far as infections, shots etc. will be taken care of excellently by the health department.

All children are weighed and measured twice during the summer session. Their eyes and ears are also checked. The nurse noticed a hearing loss in three children. The loss may be due to an accumulation of wax, and all have been referred to a doctor.

Three children need glasses. One had hers along, and they were repaired by us. The other two have glasses, but left them at home, wherever that may be.

Generally speaking, the health of all children seems to be fairly good. One boy 7 years old has rickets--the only one in the family so afflicted. Our nurse has given the family cod liver oil for the boy. It is hoped he is taking it and that they will continue to get it for him.

There have been less infectious sores this year on hands, legs, and feet. Probably due to the fact that all children seem to be of a higher standard of peoples in everything than we have experienced in the past.

We greet old friends.

We meet new ones.

Time out for a little "Horseplay".

SCHOOL

Each year as the time nears for contacting the migrant families for school, it is approached with mixed feelings. What will our reception be? Are there any of the families we know back? Can we reach them by our bus route? These and a hundred other questions race through the mind.

The process of closing regular school on Saturday and opening summer school on Monday is a hectic one. Without a great deal of help from the nurse, secretary, cook, janitor--to mention a few--it could not be done. To continue the school six days a week is hard work. Our staff goes right on with no time off. It is heartening to have people working with you who have the interest in this work and the stamina to do the work that is required.

Our school territory covers 27 miles, from Swink to 4 miles west of Fowler. Again we go out to the houses where generally the migrants are found. This may be along highway 50 and north and south of the highway. Concentrated efforts are made the last week of school and Saturdays and Sundays. On school days, the work starts after 4 o'clock and runs until one tires out. On Saturdays and Sundays--starting time is usually 5:30 a.m.

It is exhilarating to be driving in the lush Arkansas Valley early in the morning. Everything is so beautiful

and serene. The feeling always is "we just can't fail to get these children on such a morning!"

Thirty-eight families with a total of 108 children were contacted before school started. Many of them several times. The families who had been here before were only contacted once and told the time the bus would arrive and the day school would start. The new families were visited as often as time allowed. This helps establish better relationships and interests in the children's welfare. During one visit, a small child 4 years old fell on the edge of the sidewalk splitting the underside of the chin. The school nurse was brought back to treat the wound and without a doubt this action resulted in four children from that family attending school.

Of the total families contacted, 36 families entered a total of 100 children. The other families were not or could not be persuaded to enter. The feeling is one of frustration: Why couldn't they be persuaded? Work is one answer. There are still too many youngsters under 12 years old working in the fields--sugar beets as well as other crops.

The enrollment has stayed up remarkably well this year. This week, the last week, our enrollment is 77. Several families have left for a variety of reasons--wanderlust, sickness in the family, insufficient wages, etc.

As in regular school, each year any given room must be

taught a little differently because the children never respond alike. This year seems to be the best of the five years. There are the usual number who have not had any school between this summer and last summer. There are a number who are retarded because of insufficient days of attendance, and there are a few who are on the grade level for their age. For the first time, there are two girls ready for 7th grade.

The question,"what can possibly be done for these children in six-week's time?" has been asked many, many times. "Aren't you just baby-sitting?" another question. The answer to question one is--plenty is done! If there are doubters, and quite probably there are many, let them visit this school. Not once, but several times during a session. They will leave convinced. Baby-sitting? Absolutely not! Every minute of every day is a learning situation. The school is run exactly as a regular session--discipline included. Teaching and learning never stop, including morning milk and lunch hour. This is a school all Colorado should be proud to be a part, and they are a part by including it in the school budget.

So ends another year. Always in the mind are the thoughts: Where will they go? Will there be a school? Will they be accepted? What will happen to them in the next twelve months? Will they be back? Teachers and students become attached quickly, and all are concerned as to

what will become of these wanderers. Are we doing all we can in the U. S. to help in their education. Fellow Americans; it is doubtful!

Lynn Gulmon